



Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture

Friday, 11th December 2020

Panel:

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (Chair)

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chair)

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin

Witnesses:

Senator L.J. Farnham, The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture

Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1)

Deputy H.C. Raymond of Trinity, Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2)

Mr. D. Houseago, Group Director, Economy

Mr. C. Kelleher, Office of the Chief Executive

Mr. B. Harvey, Operations Manager, Sport

[11:33]

Deputy D. Johnson of St. Mary (Chair):

Good morning, everyone. Good morning, Minister, Assistant Ministers and your team. This is the meeting of the Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel quarterly hearing. Can I begin by doing the usual introductions? Possibly to save time I will introduce the panel we have and then you, Minister, can do similar at your end. I am chairing this meeting. This is David Johnson,

Deputy of St. Mary. We also have with us Deputy Stephen Luce of St. Martin and Deputy Kevin Pamplin. Minister, would you like to introduce your team?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Thank you. Good morning, Chair. I am very pleased to welcome for the first time on this side of the Scrutiny table, Deputy Kirsten Morel as a new Assistant Minister. I am very pleased to have him on board. He confided in me that he is looking forward to some really tough questioning this morning. I hope to be joined by Deputy Raymond, our other new Assistant Minister, with responsibility for sport. I know he was attending other meetings this morning, so I am not sure if he is with us as yet. He will be on the way to join us. I will allow the officers present to introduce themselves.

Group Director, Economy:

Good morning, Chair. Dan Houseago, Group Director, Economy.

Office of the Chief Executive:

Good morning, Chair and panel. Chris Kelleher, Office of the Chief Executive, with responsibility for culture, arts and heritage.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you. Welcome to you all, particularly to your new Assistant Minister. It is good to see him on the other side of the table. To kick off, if I may, a general question on whatever areas, beside COVID-19, are you currently working on?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Our business-as-usual programme has not really changed that much, although there have been some changes to the timetable. The key areas currently are economic recovery. We are also focused on arts, culture and heritage. We have a number of workstreams in place for that. The sporting portfolio, of course, remains high priority. Deputy Raymond has now taken over from Senator Pallett on that. The important piece of work I would like to flag now is in relation to the support of tourism and tourism recovery. We will be putting together a team to lead a specialist tourism strategy. It is going to be an important piece of work for us. It is now time for the Island to really take a close look and examine our tourism and hospitality sectors and create a new strategy that lays down some deep foundations and puts the industry in a good place for the future. This, of course, will be different from the very important work that Visit Jersey are doing, from a marketing perspective. It will be an opportunity for the Island to understand the huge contribution that tourism makes to the Island. We can feel a bit of that now with the hospitality sector all but closed down. It will be an opportunity as well to help tourism understand the productivity

challenges that it faces in the future. We have also made some very good progress with rural economy strategy matters, especially in relation to the development of high-value crops and we would be in a position to report more about that next week. Outside of that we have dozens of other business-as-usual workstreams going on. I do not intend to reel off a list now, unless you want me to. So very much business as usual.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. Going back to your comment on tourism, the new team, could you identify more clearly the division between the responsibility of that team and that of Visit Jersey?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Visit Jersey, as you know, is a standalone organisation, funded by our department on the back of the appropriate annual business plan and service level agreement. Dan Houseago, who is with us today, is the director with responsibility for those areas. What we will be doing, from a departmental point view, in partnership with the industry, is working on a new tourism strategy. That is something that we are going to start planning the process on imminently. I am pleased to welcome Deputy Raymond, who has now joined us, just in the nick of time.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Welcome, Deputy.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am not sure, Dan ... the announcement of the tourism strategy is something we hope to announce formally in the new year. It is something that is currently scheduled for further discussion with officers, but I just wanted to put that into the public domain now.

Deputy S.G. Luce of St. Martin:

Could I just ask, Chair, please, of the Minister? Minister, I hear what you are saying about tourism and it is a vital part of the Island's infrastructure that needs to be maintained. My question is this: is it too soon to come out with a new strategy? Should you not be focusing more on trying to maintain the size of the industry as best you can and get through this crises and then maybe think about a strategy? Will you be starting a strategy piece of work not really knowing where you are going to be starting from?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

That is a very good question, but I would take the opposite view. This is a good opportunity to put a strategy in place. The tourism industry, after the severe shock of 2020, is going to need some clear direction. It is also important to provide the support we need to, to the tourism industry. We,

the Government, the States, Islanders, need to fully understand the contribution it makes and what we expect to benefit from tourism moving into the future. Those are not just my views. These are views held by the industry. I have had a number of offline conversations with industry bodies and industry members and they are very keen for tourism strategy work to begin. We have not had a proper tourism strategy for a number of years. As we have strategies in progress for art and culture, rural economy, we need to make sure we bring tourism online as well. I understand the question, but I take the slightly opposite view: it is a good time now to lay down some new foundations and perhaps a new direction for certain aspects of our tourism industry.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, just to follow on from Deputy Luce's question, I was slightly alarmed to hear you say there is not a tourism strategy in place at the moment. That cannot be right, surely.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Generally the Tourism Department was at the forefront of our tourism work. Visit Jersey have taken over now very successfully. We have seen the increase in tourism numbers on the back of the very good work they have been doing. It is not for Visit Jersey to create our tourism strategy. They are focused pretty much on marketing, developing and the business and the factors outside of the Visit Jersey work and their business plan and marketing plans, which are excellent. We do not have a proper strategy. I could perhaps refer to the work McKinsey did on the finance industry, not so long ago, which was a really deep-dive into the industry, which extrapolated all of the benefits and challenges that that industry had to face. Tourism are long overdue for the kind of productive scrutiny, if you like.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, we will leave it at that. We look forward to seeing further details of that strategy. The other indices you mentioned just now was the rural economy. Did I understand you to say that there is some new proposal coming out in the new year?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

We are making some progress on the high value crop side of things, but we are not ready to report on that just yet. We will be able to do that next week. That is in relation to the work on the development of our cannabis industry. Perhaps I could hand over to Dan now, who will update you on a more general update of rural economy strategy work and when the initial strategy is due for review and renewal. He will give you the exact timescales for that. Dan, over to you.

Group Director, Economy:

Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you, Chair. Just going a little bit, Chair, if I may, on the

tourism point; it is important to note perhaps that some significant work is being done at the moment in terms of an assessment of both hospitality and retail. This has involved some deep-dive assessment and analysis through the future economy programme. That programme is due to report on 13th of this month. We will then be in a position to be able to give a bit more detail around what our thoughts for boxing out of COVID-19 and potentially the end of the transition period as well, at that point. This is really important precursor work in advance of the tourism strategy going forward. The Minister is absolutely right that notwithstanding that there is significant work being undertaken around an appropriate business plan for next year, for 2021, for Visit Jersey. That is addressing, as you might imagine, all of the COVID-19 challenges that we have. It involves some refocusing around supporting connectivity, which is obviously critical to the visitor economy. Moving on to the rural economy, the current strategy expires next year. My colleague, John Vautier, has been doing some excellent work in terms of liaising with the rural economy. We are pushing forward with proposals for how the next rural economy looks.

[11:45]

A final point really is around the fact that the restructuring of the Economy Department has now put some additional resource, including fisheries support, into the economic considerations. Now we have effectively got in a combined agriculture and fisheries team. That is really good and, to some extent, overdue. Now we can help the fisheries sector move into a new place in terms of looking at the opportunities that the end of the transition provides, whichever way the U.K. (United Kingdom) decides to go in the context of the free trade agreement. Thank you very much, Chair.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that and you, Minister. Perhaps we could move on to more specific matters now. I hand you over to Deputy Luce for the first area.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you, Minister. It may well be that Deputy Raymond answers these questions. They are questions about the skate park. The last I knew about it, the skate park was all systems go, but I appreciate there were a few hiccups there. Can I ask first then what the situation is with the skate park at Les Quennevais and has this tender evaluation for the designer been signed off?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Hugh can take that.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Yes, I can really update you there, Steve. I have to confess, I have been tearing around because I

was in the same position as you, I was not quite clear. It would seem that the decision to go ahead at Les Quennevais has not gone ahead. They have been talking to the Skate Board Association, or what the group is called, to look at another particular site, which seems to be all in line. Catriona wants a word with me to bring me really right up to date. It is still there and it is still in the books. I would have to confess that it is not probably going to Les Quennevais.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

That is quite a surprise then to ...

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Steve, I have to say, it was a surprise to me as well. I was very surprised.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

So the next question then is: if it is not going to Les Quennevais, where is it going and, more importantly, what will be the delay in delivering the skate park if it does not go to Les Quennevais?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

If it does not go to Les Quennevais it will be delayed until the end of next year, 2021.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Hold on a second, can I just come in? We have Barclay Harvey online, the officer responsible. I want to make clear that delivering a skateboard park is a high priority and we cannot encounter delays. Officers are well aware of that. Barclay, would you like to come in?

Operations Manager, Sport:

Yes. Good morning, panel. Can you hear me?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Yes, Barclay.

Operations Manager, Sport:

Yes, thank you. We have not been able to transition the information over to Deputy Raymond and bring him up to speed on where we are. We are still looking to submit a planning application in early February 2021 and we are still looking to complete a skate park by the end of 2021. That remains on track. Consideration is being given to another site at the request of Jersey Sport. Some feasibility work has been done on that. We are still making progress. We hope to have some more details on the second site towards the end of this year. There has been a minor delay, primarily around the restructure within the departments around Ministers. We will be bringing

Deputy Raymond up to speed on where we are at, but we have not had that chance in the last couple of weeks, simply because COVID-19 matters have taken a priority.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you, Barclay. My question has to go to the Assistant Minister, because it is going to be a political question: why have we gone away from Les Quennevais when it was agreed and how do we expect to be able to deliver a skate park on another site when that site has not even had the feasibly work done on it, given it would need a planning application, wherever it is, and be built out by the end of next year? I find that very difficult to understand.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

I will answer that, Steve, because as Barclay said, the skate park has not been on my agenda, but I have been given some information and confirm what Barclay has just said. I have a programme in front of me, where we are looking to have construction complete by 26th November 2021. There is a site being looked at. It seems to me, from what I gather here - and I am just reading this - that the groups of people involved, including Barclay and Jersey Sport, have been involved in discussions with regards to the people that run skateboarding in Jersey. As a political question, as far as I am concerned it is as what the Minister has just said and that it is going forward.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Before I hand over to Deputy Pamplin, who would like to ask a question, would you agree with me that it does seem like quite a tall order to have not yet done feasibility on a new site, given that the Minister has committed to delivering this by the end of next year, which basically gives him 12 months to decide the site, feasibility study, planning application, build-out, done?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

I will read: the feasibility study is programmed for completion by the end of this year.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

All right.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

That is what has been given to me yesterday afternoon: "The feasibility study will include concept design and make a recommendation on whether or not to use the particular site that is in the picture at the present time."

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay. Deputy Pamplin wants to jump in with a question.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Just to say, I have something as well afterwards, but, Deputy, you proceed first.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour:

We are all processing this news on our side for the first time. I have some quick-fire questions. I feel like I am doing my old job again. Firstly, has Jersey Skateboard Association been informed of this news before it has now become public?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Concept design: "The skateboard community undertaking as part of the social case report published by the end of 2018 and they have been involved in the discussions with regards to Les Quennevais Sport's Centre and moving elsewhere."

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The Jersey Skateboard Association ... the whole reason why this became a huge issue from the next election, the main people who put this on the agenda, have they been informed? That is what I am asking?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Seriously, that is what I have in front of me at the present time.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Perhaps we could just ask Barclay to clarify the position, please?

Operations Manager, Sport:

We have a very strong relationship with the J.S.A. (Jersey Skateboard Association). We committed to making sure that we have regular communication with them. We committed to this being a journey that we would go on collectively with them. We have done that for the last 12 months. We keep them in the loop and they work closely with us on all matters linked to the skate park. They have been a real credit to this project.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, next question. I am quoting the former Assistant Minister, Senator Pallett, in June of this year saying here: "Work is continuing on the planning process and design phase, so the park can be built next year. Les Quennevais Sport Centre has been picked as the most suitable question with backing of Islanders. A sum of £90,000 has been assigned. It is in the Government Plan." So in the small window between June and December what has happened? When was the

decision made? Why was it made? By all the work that we have done scrutinising this it was pushed as the most suitable location. What has changed? When did that change between June and the end of November?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Minister, I would have to say I would have to come back to Kevin on that and explain, but if Barclay knows the answer then he would know more than I would probably at this present time.

Operations Manager, Sport:

Yes. The choice of Les Quennevais was initially a desktop study that was done. Consideration was given in the latter part of the summer to whether Les Quennevais was the right place to put the skate park. Where there was a complication or further thought given was around the fact that we would have to masterplan the entire Les Quennevais sports complex and playing fields in order to fit in the skate park, and that was a consideration or a concern of Jersey Sport. Officers then went back to the drawing board and looked at all of the sites that were considered. As a result of that, an alternative site ... the then Assistant Minister for Sport asked us to look at an alternative site and do the feasibility on that. That feasibility we are aiming to have completed by 18th December and keep things on track for the delivery of a skate park in 2021. The complication was purely around the masterplanning of Les Quennevais. Part of the sports facility strategy ultimately is to redevelop the entire Les Quennevais Sports Centre and playing fields in years to come. We are probably talking 7 to 10 years down the track. It could potentially complicate things by putting in a skate park when that masterplanning was not done at this stage, so again other sites were considered.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

The question that I would like to ask now then, before we go to Deputy Johnson, is: why was this consideration not taken into account when Les Quennevais was determined to be the site we were moving forward on? I do not expect you to answer that, Barclay; it is a ministerial question.

Operations Manager, Sport:

I can support the answer, if that helps. In the desktop study, Les Quennevais was provided potentially the least line of resistance for a skate park, because it is government land, it has no covenants on it, it is not restrictive, et cetera. It was only that desktop study that brought to light that Les Quennevais was a place where we could build a skate park as quickly as possible.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Sorry to butt in, from your answer, can I assume that the site we are looking at is not owned by the government then?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Yes, it is.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

It is owned by the government?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

The new site is, yes.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Barclay, do you want to go into a bit more detail about the strong interaction we have had with the skateboard community as to the rationale for looking at the other site?

Operations Manager, Sport:

One of the most important things around the location of a site has always been to place or find a site as close to the bulk of the population as possible. The site under consideration ticks more of that box, essentially, than being out west at Les Quennevais, so that is why it is being looked at, at the moment. Again, we are happy to share that information as soon as we can.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Perhaps I can pick it up here now. It is fair to say that the skate park has been a recurring item on our agenda for quarterly hearings throughout the last year. I stand to be corrected, but as far as I am aware, this is the first indication the panel has had that there has been any indication of the park being built somewhere other than the site previously identified. I am disappointed that the panel has not been kept apprised of the developments or lack of developments. We are where we are, as they say, but can I simply ask, therefore, that we are given a separate appraisal as to where we are on that and identify the site, not necessarily in this hearing, but subsequently?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, that is fine. Can I suggest that we fully brief Deputy Raymond and Deputy Raymond arrange a private briefing for Scrutiny to put all the details around the rationale and explain the timescale, the timelines and why this has happened? As Deputy Luce said, yes, it is a tall order to stick to our timetable, but we are absolutely determined to try to do that if we possibly can. The reality of that will become apparent when you get a full private briefing, because it is still possible.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I suggest, Minister, that maybe if we are going to have the feasibility work done by the end of the year, maybe early in the new year might be more appropriate for that private briefing to be done then. I guess, what I am saying is there is little point in having a private briefing when we still do not know the outcome of where the site might be going. The Assistant Minister will have far more information early in the new year once that feasibility has been done.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Thank you.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Maybe I could move on then to the next item on the agenda, which is the Sports Academy. I appreciate that this is a project which has been ongoing for some time now.

[12:00]

Certainly the Minister and I worked on it back in the days of the last Government. The first request is to have an appraisal of the Sports Academy, please.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

As you probably know, the Sports Academy has changed its name. It will now become Strive. There have been onward negotiations, which Barclay will clarify as well, with regards to Catriona and the meetings with Ben Harvey and the Sports Academy. I must admit, I only got this in the last couple of days, with what they are planning to do in the future. It is all very exciting, but it does need to be tied up. I would have to say that I do have a slight problem because, of course, we do have the Jersey Sports Foundation, which is a charitable organisation doing the sort of things that Ben Harvey is doing. I need to get all this together, to come back in a more conclusive situation, so that you all know what is going on. Time has not been on my side, I have to confess that. They have all been on to me and they would all like to meet up. I am sorry, Stephen, but that is about as far as I can go. Again, I would be more than happy to come back.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay. That would be another good item that we could discuss, Assistant Minister, that would be very useful. Could I ask that when you come back with an update as to where we are, if you could come back with a continuing guarantee that the Sports Academy, or whatever it is going to be called in the future, have maintained the position of offering a certain amount of that time at the Academy for public use, whether that is for school children or what have you? The arrangement, I

believe, always was a facility that will have some aspects of it available to the public and youngsters of the Island to use.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

That I can confirm. From the limited information that I have, that is the intention. The one comment that I will make from my previous life: there is still the question of how you pay for the facility for going in there. There is no question that Ben Harvey and his team have put the unit for the usage of our children and for the general public.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Before Deputy Luce continues, can I raise an additional point? It comes from an article I saw in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* the other day about the sports facilities being made available during this COVID-19 emergency. A lot have been closed down and it was former Senator Routier who raised a valid point, to my mind, that it should not be a one size fits all situation. There are sports areas which do lend themselves to safe sport. Can I ask if that is being looked at within your area?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Yes, I had a meeting at the beginning of this week with regards to, for example, FB Fields, with the space there, and Grainville: because it is outside, could we use it in a better way? That is being looked at as well. Again, I am sounding very negative, but again I just have not had time to pull everything together. Can I just say that the sporting bodies have all been in touch with me with regards to coming up with suggestions? The biggest issue we have had is the one that the Minister knows about, and that is with regard to the gyms, where a couple of gyms created problems for all the gyms across the Island, which has now caused the problem. They are on to my back. There is a 3,000-signature petition at the moment, so they are getting close. However, we can only do what we are told by the advisers with regards to health. That is the situation where we stand at the moment but there is onward going. The Minister mentioned across the board that we are looking at things really on a daily basis. Hopefully, which is the most important factor of the Island is that we keep the well-being of people being able to use these sort of facilities.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for your response. You mentioned then outdoor facilities. Can I just put into the mix the fact that there are some indoor facilities which are well ventilated that are being underused? Could you confirm that they are being looked at as well?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

The whole thing is being looked at. I can say that, David, without any hesitation at all.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

A quick question that has come to my attention, mainly because it is just around the corner from my house, FB Fields has not had a good year. With the excess amount of rain this year it is not in a good state. We also know it has continual problems with the cricket nets, et cetera. I have heard various plans over the years, a couple of them myself. There is a new one about building a 5-a-side football stadium on there, which has been very popular in the United Kingdom and Europe for the last few years. Have you had any plans of such to meet with the people bringing forward such propositions, and FB Fields in the round, because it is way overdue?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Yes. I can honestly say that, that is one of the plans where I have met up. What I did not know, and I should have known from my Property Holdings hat, there is a covenant, which we had to take legal advice on, with regards to the 5-a-side football pitches. We have also had to look at the cricket in a different perspective because, as you probably know, the cycle path goes around the outside of FB Fields and there have been some queries now with regards to the fact that it could be dangerous if you have full-time cricket. That is also being looked at. One of the biggest issues is that the athletics people, the chair, Paula Allbut, has been in touch with me. The Deputy for that area has also been in touch with me. What we are trying to do is sort out a meeting over this weekend to have a chat and move it forward. There is so much space there that we need to look at how we can use it best for everybody. I do have a legal problem with regards to this 5-a-side pitch, which I have now asked the lawyers to come back and explain. It is something to do with the way the land was sold many years ago and there is a covenant on it, which affects the people that are living around that particular area. Just as a funny comment: the argument was if it was good enough for ladies playing netball there, it is okay for footballers, because the ladies tend to be a bit noisier than footballers playing 5-a-side football. However, there is a legal issue, unfortunately.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am not going to get into that argument. Just to put a little more information on that, if I may, Deputy. The land was gifted to the States and one of the covenants was that change of use needs to have the agreement of neighbouring land and property owners. We all fully support the options that have been proposed. I would like to make that clear. We have to find a way through this. Barclay, do you want to add anything more.

Operations Manager, Sport:

Yes, by all means. For Deputy Pamplin, FB Fields is a fantastic facility. It accommodates a huge amount of winter football. Clearly we have a world-class athletics track there and a very well-run athletics club. We facilitate summer cricket. We are having to reconsider some of the cricket being played at FB Fields, primarily because the game of cricket has evolved over the last 15 years to be a game where you hit the ball very hard, very far and despite the fact that we have very high 10-metre netting around some of the pitches, we have had some cricket balls reach that netting, which creates a concern. We are in discussion with the Jersey Cricket Board as to how we take the necessary steps to keep that facility safe, in terms of cricket and the surrounding houses. We worked with them for the latter part of this summer, to make sure that FB 3, which is the furthest cricket pitch away from the main pavilion, is now going to be junior cricket only. Cricketers are hitting the ball 90-plus metres, which is huge. It is purely because of the evolution of the game that has changed. With all due respect to the boundaries of FB Fields, we cannot make FB Fields any bigger. Again, we have good dialogue with Jersey Cricket Board. The drainage, with all due respect, we cannot do much about. We have had an incredibly wet October. Things are better now. We shockwave the pitch, do all the necessary stuff, and we have a very good team who look after the playing surface of that pitch. As the Senator said, there are some very complicated covenants linked to a small area of land behind the athletics pavilion where a number of houses surrounding that, that gifted that land for the public, is not an easy conundrum to solve. We have requested additional law office advice on this and we are hoping to bring Deputy Raymond and Senator Farnham up to speed on it as soon as we get that advice. With all due respect to the law office, we are in a queue, but we hope to get that advice shortly, but there are complicated covenants.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Just very quickly. Would that also, if a plan came forward to have an indoor 5-a-side centre, let us just fast forward: "That is a great idea. Let us approve that", would we have similar problems because of possible noise and other issues?

Operations Manager, Sport:

The covenants on FB Fields preclude pretty much any development of any further buildings. The whole of FB Fields was gifted to the public by the Florence Booth family, so I do not believe that any additional structures could be put on to that site. But, again, we are asking the law office for that advice. Just to comment on the cricket nets, we have a plan in place for next year. We have some capital money and we have made a commitment to refurbish all those nets. Again, we are working with the Jersey Cricket Board to make sure that that work gets done. Those crickets at FB Fields will definitely have a facelift next year. You are correct that they need a bit of T.L.C. (tender loving care) and we are looking at that. Again, we have set some money aside to do that

and improve those facilities in 2021.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Sorry to hijack. Back to you, Deputy of St. Martin.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you. One last question from me, Assistant Minister, which is sort of a transition question, which takes us from sport into Fort Regent; we have mentioned the sports facility strategy and work. We have had a report waiting to be made public for some time about sports facilities. Can I ask where that is? The last time I heard it was heading for Council of Ministers potentially for sign-off. I think it is pertinent, given the questions we have just spoken about in relation to FB. We are just in a minute going to talk about Fort Regent. This work was designed to show us where sports around the Island could be put and where the future facilities are. It is an important piece of work. The question is: where is it?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Did it go to Council of Ministers on Wednesday?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

It went to C.O.M.s (Council of Ministers) on Wednesday?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The Fort Regent strategy and the sports facilities strategy, which have been through the Council of Ministers, have now been cleared to proceed to the next stage. That happened last week.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay. Thank you for that.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I would just say, the sports facility strategy, the revised report, is a broad and detailed piece of work, which I am sure Deputy Raymond will want to share with Scrutiny. Like I say, it is all interlinked to the questions that were asked earlier by the Chair in relation to what is happening as a result of COVID-19. There are some very good plans which we look forward to sharing with you. The next stage, and the funding for the next stage, has been approved by the Council of Ministers.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Okay. That leads us very nicely into the Fort Regent subject. Deputy Johnson is going to lead on this.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that, Steve. Yes, they are interlinked, obviously. It is fair to say, when considering our questions, we had not realised we were going to have the privilege of entertaining the new Assistant Minister for Sports. My welcome to him there.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Thank you, David.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

While questions are being asked here, I expect you are able to better answer them as Chair of the Fort Regent Steering Group.

[12:15]

First of all, the Government Plan identifies a few funding streams to Fort Regent. How do they all fit together?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

In what sense, David? What we were going to do with Fort Regent has been slightly restricted because we were going to do the inoculations up there and everything else, which we are planning to finish by the end of June. We have basically now made the decision that nothing is going to happen with Fort Regent, probably until the end of September, because there are certain people who have booked Fort Regent at the present time - Barclay will confirm all this as well - that we will probably go ahead with because we have to make sure that everybody in the Island gets inoculated with COVID-19. The intention is that I should be releasing a document, subject to the Ministers, the first week of January. I do take the point that it would be good to run through it with you all. As Scrutiny, you should be up to date with some of the suggestions that are being made. I am hesitating only because I sit here with 2 hats now, because Property Holdings own the building and Sports and Events are the tenants. Knowing everything across the board, I am looking at you, Minister, as to what I say to which Scrutiny group. I am not clear. I have to say, I do get confused on this. You know I do. I am getting one side and the other side and I am not sure what I am supposed to say, to be perfectly frank.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I would like to think it is all reasonably straightforward at the end of the day. There are issues. Last year we had to close a number of areas of the Fort due to a range of health and safety issues, including asbestos problems, emergency lighting and so forth. They were fixed in March of this year and the Fort was partially reopened. There are options for the medium and long-term development for Fort Regent, which currently are being developed. There are some excellent ideas coming forward at quite an advanced stage, I would say. An update of the latest proposals was presented to the Council of Ministers, together with the sports facility strategy, at the meeting on 4th December. Ministers agreed that public consultation on the proposals will begin in quarter one of next year, so the momentum of the political oversight group of Fort Regent, which Deputy Raymond chairs, has continued pretty much through the pandemic. Now the announcement that the Queen's Hall is going to be used as the vaccination centre has led to some expedited work in relation to relocating some of the sports we have there into other sports estates. Several events are provisionally booked at Fort Regent for the second half of 2021. We do not envisage having to make any cancellations at this time, given the timescale, as the vaccination programme is currently planned to be complete in the Queen's Hall by the end of quarter 2. Barclay can come in and correct me or add anything I may have missed.

Operations Manager, Sport:

You are absolutely right. We have a list of events that are provisional for 2021. A briefing paper has just been written and sent to my respective Ministers, to give them an oversight of that, as it were. We would like to host those events, if possible, once the vaccine centre has finished its work, but clearly that takes a priority. All the Fort staff are working really hard to support that programme. Unquestionably, it is a challenging environment to function out of and has been for the last couple of years. However, we get the support of Property Holdings and everyone has done an amazing job to keep things going there. There have been one or two sports that we have moved; for example, gymnastics we have moved from the Queen's Hall into the Gloucester. But everybody has been incredibly supportive of the vaccine programme, purely because of its importance.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you. I am somewhat concerned that nothing is going to happen until the end of September, which is what you have just said, Minister, but I do appreciate the COVID-19 situation. Can you just remind me of what sorts of activities are booked for the second half of next year?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Barclay has that list.

Operations Manager, Sport:

Yes, we have a couple of concerts booked, the likes of Jimmy Carr and Sarah Millican. We have an event provisionally booked with the J.S.O. (Jersey Symphony Orchestra) in August 2021. As I say, we are just giving our Ministers a sighting of those events, so that we can essentially give those event operators or those bookers confirmation.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

All right. Going back to a theme which we have just left; do you envisage sports provision being made available at the Fort in the future, beyond the COVID-19 situation?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I can give a short answer to that. Excuse me interrupting. The medium to longer-term plans indicate that the simple answer to that is: no, we do not. We envisage Fort Regent being a big multiuse space with some very exciting plans that are being developed now, which is why the parallel work of the sports facility strategy is so important. They are working in parallel.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that clarification. That is the first I have heard a negative comment on sports at Fort Regent.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

It was not meant as a negative comment. It is positive for the Fort, but future plans would indicate that sport would not be a part of the future of Fort Regent. Having said that, part of Fort Regent would be a big multiuse open space, so it could hold sports tournaments and so on and so forth, but that is work that is in progress.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, when I said negative, I meant negative for sports provision.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Sure, I know.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, thank you.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

The work going on behind the scene though, David, with regards to going elsewhere for sport is the most positive thing I have seen for some time, with some of the suggestions that are coming out. We should be able to make that known to most people in the early part of next year. Barclay

has done a tremendous job with Property Holdings and Kevin Lewis has been great in putting his team together. It does look good. The good thing about it, which is the one thing that the Council of Ministers were very pleased with, we are not doing it temporarily. Most of the stuff that we are doing is going to be spent and positively done and they will still be used for sport. It will not be: "You are going there temporarily." That piece of the work is coming out in the new year and we are delighted to tell everybody about it.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. You do prefer to work behind the scenes. All I was going to ask is: can the work be made in front of the scenes so we can see it? Your officer also referred to a briefing paper having gone out. How soon might Scrutiny be given the chance of seeing that, on a confidential basis if necessary?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Happy to share.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you, that would be good. Perhaps you could advise, Assistant Minister, that before his hearing, the panel had already resolved to do a piece of work regarding Fort Regent and from what you say there will be a lot of material for us to look at. We look forward to working with you. Obviously the sooner we can have some sort of idea as to where you are planning to go, the better it will be.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Yes.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Is David Curtis on the call by any chance?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Does not appear to be.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Okay, fine, we will ask David Curtis to perhaps work with Deputy Raymond and get a presentation for Scrutiny planned. Is that okay?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (2):

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

In which case, we have gone as far as we can on that topic.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just say to the Minister, if I might, Chairman, he will be aware, like I am, that there are enough reports on Fort Regent to fill up a considerably large lorry? In all the time that reports have been published the infrastructure of the Fort has not had a considerably large amount of money spent on it. It is struggling. He will be aware of that. We cannot delay very much longer making decisions as whether sport is in or sport is out, where we are doing events, whatever. A decision has to be made and I would like to think he would agree with that.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Absolutely, Deputy. If I can say, I remember back in the late 1990s, a very good report which looked at improving the uses of Fort Regent and all of the access facilities and the recent report by the Infrastructure Department, when Deputy Noel was the relevant Minister. What I can say, with all the work and the neglect of Fort Regent, this is by far the most progress we have ever made. We have a Fort Regent Oversight Group now with advanced plans for the future of the Fort, running in parallel to a very new and exciting sports facility strategy. I am more confident than I ever have been that we are going to make some real progress.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Do you think it is a mistake to have let the South Hill site go for housing, Minister, when it could have been considered as part of the larger ...?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

You are probably asking the wrong, Minister.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I would not think so.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I would like to think, because one of the big problems that I am sure keeps our minds occupied is the housing challenges we have, it is more important to get a future planned and agreed for Fort Regent. It is such a tremendously important asset for Islanders. It is nothing short of a disgrace that we have left it for so long. As I said, real progress is being made; more progress than I have seen in the last 20 years.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you, that is very good news.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am mindful of the time. We only have half an hour left and a few topics. I am sure Deputy Pamplin will speed through the queries he has on heritage, arts and culture, and which I am sure, equally speedily, the new Assistant Minister will respond to, so over to Deputy Pamplin.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Fort Regent is going to be very important all of next year for the vaccine programme. Let us not be under any illusion that is going to be next year's priority for Fort Regent. Right, arts and culture: at the last quarterly hearing the panel was advised that the Economic Council made recommendations to the Minister that the cultural strategy was to be completed by the end of the year. So, please, after the bombshell earlier of the skateboard park news, can you update the panel on the process that was undertaken following the last quarterly hearing and to acquire the extra things needed to deliver the strategy?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Absolutely. It is a Cultural and Arts Strategy. Yes, I believe it has been about 15 years since we have had a new one brought into play. We have appointed a creative consultancy, a gentleman by the name of Tom Fleming. He has been commissioned, after a tender process, to undertake the work on an Art Strategy. Our plan is to publish that Strategy by the end of Q2 2021, so June of next year.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thank you, that is helpful. Can you also advise us what work has been undertaken to consolidate aspects of the Heritage, Arts and Culture Strategy, as you quite rightly said just now, it is part of that as well?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Yes, there are 2 separate strategies: the arts and culture strategy and the heritage strategy. The heritage strategy has been commissioned by Jersey Heritage. They have used Historic England to guide them on that work. I believe we are going to see the heritage strategy published by the end of March.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You mentioned Historic England there as well. Can you update us on what you have seen and what you have gathered in the last few days about where we are at with that and your engagement

with consultants to see what work in continuing in your short time?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Yes, in my short time. It is something I have yet to look at. I have spent my time speaking a lot to Jersey Heritage this week, with regard to Elizabeth Castle. The heritage strategy is pretty much the next piece of work I have to look at and understand. So, no, I have not yet reviewed it.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

No worries. The heritage strategy then, you cannot really say when that would be completed?

[12:30]

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Yes, it is very much in its draft situation at the moment. We are looking at March for publication.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

It will not surprise you to hear me saying these things, but what engagement is going on and how good is it? Also, on the same wavelength, the communication of that as well, because they are so critical with all the stakeholders involved in all of these things?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Are you talking about specifically the heritage strategy?

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

All the aspects we have just been through basically.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

The heritage strategy is being driven by Jersey Heritage. They are clearly leading that role. From my perspective, once I sit down and review the strategy, one of the things I will be wanting to see is how they have worked with other heritage organisations in the Island. I have spent a lot of time speaking to Jersey Heritage this week. With regard to the culture strategy, I have already been reaching out, and use this week to start reaching out to the arts organisations. I have meetings planned in the coming weeks. One of the things that I want to make sure of is that all the relevant groups are being spoken to by the ministerial team. That is my responsibility to do that.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, good. The impact of these organisations, arts especially, has been massive this year. If the Opera House is going to be worked on then that entertainment venue is not going to be in play; do

you not agree that this is a good time to step back and look at the whole thing in the round and how we could be better managing the assets and where those assets could be better managed, maybe possibly outside of Government?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

That is interesting. In a sense, if you are talking about heritage assets, obviously Jersey Heritage Trust operates independently and so is managing that outside of Government. With regard to the arts assets, our 2 largest, the Arts Centre and the Opera House, are organisations that I absolutely will be speaking with to understand how they feel is best going forward. They also do operate very independently of government. They do take funding from government, but they operate very independently of it.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I know you will not mind me asking this, I am sure: in your early days what are the obstacles to overcome why arts and culture has been stuck and has not seen much importance put on them? I would argue that over the last 18 months things have completely slowed down. It is very hard to look at somewhere where progress has been made, where something has been championed for the world of heritage and art, aside from the former Assistant Minister's success in the Assembly for achieving that funding. What is your assessment in the work ahead that you have gotten?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

The first thing, as I have said already, is that I am going to be liaising closely with the relevant organisations. The important thing is that they are spoken to and that they know that they have a direct line to Ministers. The funding, as you have mentioned, is really important. As a sector, culture and arts now know they have funding in place, guaranteed, reaching up to 1 per cent of government spend by 2022. That is a very large amount of money. They are going to be able to operate in a way they have never been able to before. From my perspective, from a Ministerial policy perspective, your absolutely right about the fact that arts and culture, through this pandemic, have been hit very hard. We have seen all our theatres closed. People have not been able to operate as normal, so 2021 is incredibly important in getting their feet back on the ground. We have over £900,000 of extra funding to help them do that. Even more importantly than that is the role that I see the culture and arts sectors playing in bringing our community together; creating a stronger sense of Island identity; reaching out to minority groups in the Island - I still do not think we are reaching out to them enough - and most importantly, helping young people recover from not just this pandemic but recover from the economic crash of 2008. I am really worried about prospects for young people, and culture and arts have an enormous role to play in helping them see a bright future in the Island.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Good stuff, thank you. That was whistling quick, Chairman. Feel free to get stuck in if you like, but with that it is back to you.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Chair, may I just follow up, just to push back a little bit on a comment Deputy Pamplin made, if I may? The arts organisations, the Arts Centre, Art House Jersey, Jersey Heritage Trust, have performed exceptionally well in recent years. The funding, even before Deputy Tadier's successful proposition, which we all welcomed, had been increased, new business plans agreed, new service level agreements put in place, and additional funding has helped the Arts Centre. I want to particularly look to the work of Art House Jersey, who have done some incredibly innovative things over the last couple of years. Jersey Heritage Trust, of course, are absolutely essential. As well as their contribution to heritage they have also been recognised as an essential public service and for such have just received another £1.1 million of pandemic support. I am not trying to get brownie points for the Government or my department here; I would rather just say they have done that because of each of their huge dedication to their causes under difficult circumstances. Where we have not done well is in looking after the structure of some of our buildings. The Jersey Arts Centre and the Opera House are 2 cases in point. I just wanted to make that clear, if I may. Thank you.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

If I could come in as well, just to pick up on Arts House Jersey. If you look at their programme for the year ahead, it is really exciting. You can see that the arts are turning a corner in Jersey. We are going to have a lot of different thinking in the way arts are delivered. I find that really incredibly exciting. I have had no input into their programme for the year ahead, but they deserve praise for the types of work they are bringing for Jersey. They are unusual, they are different and the community will be engaged.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you, Minister and Assistant Minister, for your comments on that. We look forward to working with you on that area in the future. Moving on to another area, completely differently, liquor licensing. I know that this is one of the areas nominated to the Assistant Minister again, but it is perhaps unfair to expect him to answer certain questions on this, but some very brief questions. Could you give us an update as to where we are on the introduction of new liquor licensing legislation?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

From what I have seen and the brief time I have had to review it, I would have to say liquor

licensing has not moved very far. Please jump in, Senator Farnham, if you feel that I am getting that wrong. We are still at the stage of engaging with stakeholders to understand the best way forward. There was a group engaged. I am not entirely sure where we are with their work at the moment, but I am going to be looking through the literature, so to speak, and most importantly engaging with stakeholders to understand where we want to go. I am not sure whether we need the full revamping of liquor licensing or if that had previously been on the cards. It may be a better way to take smaller changes forward. That will help us move forward quicker.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. As you are aware, I am interested in this area myself. I was involved with the previous Scrutiny Panel on this, where we got to the brink of it coming into legislation. It is a source of disappointment to me personally that it did not go through, because we were almost there. I am also aware that there was a proposition recently taken forward, which, as you say, referred to the establishment of a working group. In addition to that there had also been meetings with the Bailiff, presumably about the constitution of the Licensing Assembly. Are you able to give any information about that? Is that one of the sticking points, who the Licensing Authority should be?

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Senator Farnham may be better placed to answer. I do not know what took place in those conversations with the Bailiff. As I understand, at the moment there is no plan on paper to change the constitution of the Licensing Assembly. Our focus is likely to be on policy and having Government politically-led policy direction, but not necessarily doing an enormous amount to change the way the Licensing Assembly works. I do stand to be corrected on that.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The Assistant Minister has very adroitly captured the position. The Bailiff made it clear, it is not his place to comment on what States policy might be. The Licensing Assembly, in this case, is acting on behalf of the States, in line with the relevant legislation. There have been different trains of thought politically on this. We are all in agreement that the Licensing Law needs tidying up. There needs to be more consultation with the licensing industry, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. That is a big piece of work for Deputy Morel to get to grips with. Obviously he is going to want to introduce his own views, once he has had a chance to review everything that has gone before. It is an important piece of work that he is going to get a grip of very quickly. It does not need huge amounts of work. The important thing is some updated industry consultation.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

As well, Chair, sorry, is I absolutely understand your interest in the subject. We have discussed it

ourselves once or twice in the past. I do have in my head ... and I may come back to regret this, but I am in this position for 18 months and I want to see progress made and I want you to be able to see progress made in that time, because I know it is a matter that is important to you.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Can we just ask in our officer who has been working on that; Dan might like to add anything?

Group Director, Economy:

Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you, Chair. I want to give an officer view, and it is the view I am going to give the Deputy when we meet on Monday, to reiterate that in October 2020 the Council of Ministers agreed to establish a Licensing Law Task and Finish Group. The Council of Ministers charged it, effectively, with developing reform proposals next year. Obviously this group was to have been chaired by the then Assistant Minister and would have included Ministers from Health and Social Services, Home Affairs, and the Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources. The direction to be taken by that group was informed by the decision of the States to adopt part (a) and (c) of the proposition on drinks promotions, as lodged by Deputy Ash of St. Clement, P.105/2020. The big challenge for us, and it is something that we are working on, in advance of next year, as we speak, effectively, is to provide an appropriate amount of policy support to support that group. That is really critical. It is quite a complicated and chewy piece of work, as we all know. To get an appropriate level of support for Ministers is really critical. Finally, the options that we need to include are, effectively, a dusting off of P.103 and drafting a statement of licensing policy to lodge within it and also to build in clarity around licence categories, fees and potentially reinstating the Licensing Assembly as a decision-making body. Of course, that is to be discussed and debated. Re-entering P.103, to give the Parishes more decision-making powers, with the Licensing Assembly becoming the appeal body, effectively; making some incremental changes to the existing 1974 law; and a clean sheet review of licensing legislation. As you can see, that is quite a chunky and complex piece of work, but I am convinced and confident that we can support the development of that in a significant way next year.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, I hear all that. I am a bit concerned that a lot of the previous draft law produced was also a major piece of work, a lot of consultation did take place and I would hate to think that would be all thrown out of the window. The one relevant point, and I was discussing this with Deputy Luce earlier this morning, goes back to my question yesterday, Senator. It would be a cumbersome process, as I understand, to simply suspend some alcoholic licences, which would enable cafés, et cetera, to carry on business. The whole area of the various forms for licences really needs to be looked at in depth, with a view to simplifying it. Adaption is one of the areas that will be given first priority.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, there is significant opportunity to do some real spring cleaning of the law, simplify the categories of licence and just make it a lot more user-friendly and flexible.

[12:45]

Again, I am sure Deputy Morel will want to get a full understanding of what has gone before, before he starts redirecting the policy.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay, I will leave it at that. As I say, time is marching on, so can I pass on to Deputy Pamplin, who has various questions arranged on the COVID-19 situation in particular?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just ask, Chair, before Deputy Pamplin starts, a question of the Minister related to COVID-19 and licensing? I see that luxury hotels, Liberation Group, Randalls, JP Restaurants and Dolan Hotels, have just issued a letter to Ministers asking for continued support, given the COVID-19 crisis. Can I ask the Minister: do you think the right decision was taken when we closed licensed premises, given that many of them only serve very little amounts of alcohol and concentrate more on soft drinks, coffees and light meals? Do you think we should have thought a bit more carefully before making that decision? We have basically closed some businesses entirely, businesses that only serve very small amounts of alcohol.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Personally, I would have liked to have seen an element of some continuation, albeit in a very controlled manner. The medical and scientific advice was absolutely unequivocal, from our advisers. When Ministers are faced with that kind of very firm and unequivocal advice then, I believe, the Council of Ministers acted appropriately and accordingly. I understand it was a severe blow to the industry. There were 2 trains of thought, because there are premises that have liquor licences and then the premises that do not, like places of refreshment. I am pleased we managed to avoid a complete close-down of places with refreshment licences as well, which could have happened, because the COVID-19 has not said: "I am only going to attack people that are drinking alcohol and not people who are drinking coffee." The environments where people socialise in the winter months, and there is some evidence to back this up, do contribute to the spread of the virus. I know it is inconsistent and it seems odd that a café or an establishment with a licence is closed, but a café next door, without one, is able to open. At least that allows an element of the premises that provide refreshment to remain open. Of course, they have to operate within the new social

distancing rules. That was preferable to them shutting everything down, although it does introduce an element of inconsistency. Notwithstanding that, with the licensed premises shut, there is significantly less opportunity for the spread of the virus in those environments.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Sorry, before I hand over to Deputy Pamplin, follow-up to that. Do you not think that, apart from the inconsistency and perhaps unfairness of some situations, does it not also affect the retail trade in that many people would take the opportunity to go out, shop and partake of refreshment at a neighbouring establishment and they are effectively put off? So it not just the licensing aspect, it is also the impact it might have on retail traders as a whole.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Yes, it has. It has a big impact on many aspects of Islanders' lives, health and well-being. Deputy Pamplin will know the importance of being able to meet up for a meal and a coffee and talk to friends and relatives. It is vitally important to the way we conduct our lives and our general overall well-being. There are ramifications. That goes back to if ever we want to know what the Island would be like without a tourism industry or a severely diminished tourism industry, we would just have to look at the position we are in now, because this is a flavour of that and demonstrates the importance of the hospitality sector to Island life and , of course, all the economic spin-offs that it has.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am aware of the time factor, so over to Deputy Pamplin for the COVID-19 questions.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Picking up some of the thrust, because that was some of the questions. The issue really here is not seeing that medical advice. I hate to bring it up again, but any opportunity I do. We do not have the S.T.A.C. (Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell) minutes available to us, either in Scrutiny or publicly, per my proposition, still outstanding from July. We got great information from Dr Muscat, because we were able to get in front of him and ask him questions and information came out. A petition and States questioning brought out the information about gyms. What we are struggling to see, and if it is there then great, because I 100 per cent back Dr Muscat. We have not seen the transmission rate in these places being affected that should determine the decision-making. Nobody understands this virus and how it works more than me - okay, Dr Muscat - but the point being the information and the communication has got to be consistent and deep-rooted, because it is because of the viral disease, it is seemingly difficult to understand how some places operate differently. So I urge that again to Government Members that we need to get that reassurance as early as possible to the public. I was in a new business the other day ...

sorry, to be going on about this. They have taken on 18 new members of staff, they have expanded their business, they are social distancing, they are mask-wearing, they have got a hygiene routine and all their customers have been all fully doing it; 18 people now suddenly unemployed and their industry has been hit. They are like: "But we have done everything we have been asked. Show us the data where the virus spreads in these environments." I do not want to go too much upon that. Respond to that if you like, but I best ask a question. My question is on the co-funded payroll scheme, particularly the more recent sliding scale of financial support available to businesses. Is that going to be sufficient now, given what we are seeing on a day-to-day basis and the growing transmission rates and seeing things like libraries closing, buses being scaled back. Is this enough to what we are dealing with in real time?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

The new package and measures are not just based around the payroll support scheme, but there are other support measures in place, including the bank loan guarantee scheme. I am sure you probably all know, but just to be clear, the co-funded payroll scheme has been made more dynamic, insofar as rather than as it was with a fixed percentage for a fixed detriment, it is now flexible. The last iteration made allowance for the scheme to gradually reduce, so from a detriment level of 20 per cent to a contribution going from 80 to 60 to 40 to 30 per cent between now and the end of April. That was changed in light of recent happenings. Now the co-funded payroll scheme detriment test is a business detriment plus 20 per cent, capped at 80 per cent or £1,600 a month. For example, if a business is 40 per cent down on the same month or previous 3 months the business can choose which measure they want to apply, then they would get their detriment plus 20 per cent. So a 40 per cent detriment would attract a 60 per cent contribution to their payroll. In terms of the hospitality sectors that have been closed down, they would now qualify for the maximum contribution, which is back up to 80 per cent. Quite clearly that is not going to be enough to sustain them during a longer period of closure. We are giving consideration now to what additional support can be provided.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just ask one question, if I might, Deputy Pamplin? Sorry to butt in. Minister, from what I can see, £138 million put aside for co-funded payroll scheme, only £9.8 million spent in September and October. Can I ask the question: how much of that £138 million has been spent? It did seem to me that we have allocated a huge amount of money to COVID-19 back in the spring and in some cases very little of it has been spent.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I have just had the latest figures through, but I cannot find them at the moment. In terms of payroll support, I understand over £100 million has been paid out in payroll support since the scheme

started of the £138 million. With the £138 million for business measures was estimated and is due to take us to the end of March. With the improved payroll scheme we should still be able to come inside that figure, I am pleased to say. Over £100 million has already been paid out.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thanks, Steve. Final question really from me, though I have just clocked the time, and I could talk about COVID-19 and responses for a day and a half, but I will hand back to the Chair.

Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (1):

Sorry, could I just quickly ask, just with regard to S.T.A.C. minutes, Deputy Pamplin, you are absolutely right to keep pushing for them. I do not have any idea why they are not being published. What little I can do, although I am not in the right department, I will also try to push for them as well. I agree that we should be seeing them, because the States Assembly asked for that to be the case. The co-funded payroll scheme has provided a lifeline for hundreds of businesses across the Island. There is no question. But I am having reports, and this is the bit Senator Farnham may not be too keen on me saying, that some of the rules are being incredibly strictly applied, so businesses are then losing out, because of half a per cent here or 1 per cent there, even though they are down on other months. That is something I want to try and get to the bottom of, because this is the time when we want to support businesses in depth. For the sake of half a per cent one month, even if they are down on other months, we should not be denying them that support. I will reap the consequences later from the Minister, but it was worth saying that.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

No, I concur with the Assistant Minister. Deputy Pamplin knows he is pushing at an open door with me. We have worked together on this in the past. I can assure Members of the panel that S.T.A.C. do keep minutes and the decisions are evidence-based. It would be helpful for them to be published in a more timely fashion, but everyone is under an enormous amount of pressure. I am not making excuses, but the minutes do exist and they do contain the relevant evidence.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I know we are getting very close to the end of our time, Chair; maybe I could just throw in a question for the Minister on a general subject. The Prime Minister has this morning said that he thinks it is very, very likely that we are heading for a no-deal scenario with Brexit. Would you agree with me, I do not like to be downbeat, but with COVID-19, with Brexit and with the financial economy in the situation we have that 2021 is going to start off in a very challenging way?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

We know next year is going to be challenging, as the Deputy knows, because we work together on the Brexit Group that the trials, tribulations, challenges and the rollercoaster ride that we have all been through in recent days and weeks is quite unsettling. We still do not know what is going to happen. Whatever does happen, I have no doubt, that Jersey will put itself in the best possible position it can. Of course, we have made our forecast in relation to a very, very tough COVID-19 year and the ramifications of Brexit, whatever they may be, are also going to make for a very challenging recovery period. I want to counter that and remind Members of the work that has been going on behind the scenes on the recovery process and the planned recovery process, the Future Economy Group, the work that the Economic Council have been doing. We are due to see their rather visionary report published next Tuesday. There are some real opportunities for us out of these dark, dark days. The Fiscal Panel work, which I know all Members will be familiar with, does suggest that although 2021 will be difficult, we can expect a full recovery, taking COVID-19 and Brexit into account, over the next 3 to 4 years. Yes, challenging times, but the important thing is going to be making sure we have really coherent strategy and policy in place around the economic activity that is going to be required to see that recovery.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

My final question, Chair, will be this for the Minister: we are debating the Government Plan next week, but would the Minister agree with me that given COVID-19 and Brexit and the challenges we are going to face that the likelihood that many of the things in the Government Plan will never come to fruition?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I am not prepared to totally agree with the Deputy. I think he is partially right. That could also be said for previous Government Plans.

[13:00]

The Government Plan is a relatively new way of doing things. If you go back and look at Government Plans, which were 4-year plans, they change quite considerably from one year to the next. The Government Plan is put together with careful planning and the very best intentions. It will be amended, quite rightly, by Members. Given the unique circumstances we find ourselves in, there is a high likelihood that some of the things that are in the Government Plan for next year simply will not happen. The next Government Plan could be significantly different to this one. I partially agree, but not fully.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Thank you, Minister.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Before we finish, one very general comment. I apologise in a way for raising it. One branch of the media has written saying that a lot of Jersey businesses had received direct communication from the U.K. Government as to the measures they should take in a post-Brexit age. They were concerned that the Government in Jersey was providing their counterparts in the U.K. with a list of all businesses. I presume you can categorically say that would never happen. Could you point to any particular area where that information might be openly available?

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

I can categorically say that has not happened or, to the best of my knowledge, it has not happened. It would be an extraordinarily unrealistic claim. It is difficult to comment without seeing the media piece or judging the credibility of it, but that is highly unlikely. Senator Gorst and his team have worked extremely hard on the Brexit matter and have worked extremely hard to keep Islanders and businesses updated through our own Government.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you for that. That was not the point. The concern was that people with Jersey businesses, their information was somehow being referred to a U.K. Government agency. That was the element of concern, not in relation to the content of the advice, which was probably quite helpful. Okay, thank you for that confirmation.

The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture:

Some Island businesses do appear on U.K. databases of various sorts, so I would suspect they have been included from that type of situation. I can reassure Members that the Government would not share business details to the U.K. Government in relation to Brexit.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am sure it is the case. Thank you for that. Finally then, may I thank you, Minister, Assistant Ministers and team for your help this morning. We have identified a few areas which do need further scrutiny, in the broadest sense of the word. I note that you are able to provide us with information earlier than the new year on a few points. We look forward to receiving that. Thank you all. I will see some of you again, but if not, have a good Christmas.

[13:03]